



Online harassment, real harm: Fixing the web's biggest bug

By DAVID KLEPPER

The Associated Press

PROVIDENCE, R.I. (AP) —

It should have been a time of celebration: Brittan Heller would soon graduate from college and head to one of the nation's top law programs.

But when a classmate with unrequited feelings for Heller wasn't admitted to that same school, he turned his rage on her. He wrote a manifesto titled "A Stupid B---h to Attend Yale Law School" and posted it on a site popular with anonymous trolls.

The man urged them to do their worst.

Soon strangers were making derogatory, sexualized comments and posting her pictures online. They made threats. Posted her personal information. At one

point, FBI agents escorted Heller to class for her protection.

"People say, 'Oh, just log off. Don't read it. Turn off the computer,'" said Heller, who turned her personal experience from 15 years ago into a legal specialty as a leading expert on on-line harassment.

"This the 21st century, and people have a right to use the internet for work, for pleasure or to express themselves. Telling people not to read the comments is no longer enough. We don't talk enough about this problem, and we need to."

Online harassment has become such a familiar part of the internet that it can be hard to imagine the web without it.

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Tina Meier, founder of the Megan Meier Foundation, poses for a photo in the foundation's office Wednesday, Dec. 8, 2021, in St. Charles, Mo.

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Continued from Front

From teen cyberbullying to authoritarian governments silencing dissent, online toxicity is a fact of life for everyone, with women, teens and religious and racial minorities the most likely to be targeted.

And there is evidence the problem is getting worse.

In 2014, 15% of Americans said they had faced severe or significant online abuse, defined as stalking, physical threats, sustained harassment or sexual harassment. In 2021 the number was 25%, according to studies by the Pew Charitable Trusts.

Health care workers, journalists, teachers, police and government workers have all reported increases in online harassment in recent years, as the pandemic and political polarization led many people to release their anger and fear online. Nearly three in four female journalists reported receiving threats or other forms of online harassment, according to a survey by UNESCO and the International Center for Journalists that polled more than 700 journalists in more than 100 countries. One in five of those said the harassment escalated to offline abuse or even assault.

The growth of the internet has also expanded the ways that people can be targeted beyond merely email to social media posts, direct messages, texts and streaming video. And with the rise of smartphones and cheap, ubiquitous internet, harassment can now be a 24-7 problem for victims.

"We've made so many strides — there's more awareness now — but it's easy to get frustrated and to feel like we've gotten nowhere," said Tina Meier, who started a foundation to teach kids and parents about online harassment after her daughter's suicide in 2006.

Thirteen-year-old Megan Meier had been bullied by someone she met online who she thought was a teenage boy named Josh. The two had flirted until the person suddenly turned against Megan. "Everybody hates you," "Josh" wrote. "The world would



Tina Meier, founder of the Megan Meier Foundation, poses for a photo in the foundation's office Wednesday, Dec. 8, 2021, in St. Charles, Mo.

Associated Press

be a better place without you." Police later determined that "Josh" was actually an adult woman, the mother of one of Megan's classmates.

While polls show all types of people are susceptible to online harassment, extensive research has shown that women and people of color are far more likely to be targeted. That's also true for people with disabilities, people who belong to religious minorities and members of the LGBTQ community.

Women are more likely than men to say online harassment is a serious problem, Pew found. They're also more likely to report being the victims of online sexual harassment and more serious abuse such as threats of physical harm.

The difference is so great that many men may not understand the severity of the demeaning language, sexualized insults and unwanted attention that women frequently face online. A coordinated harass-

ment campaign against female video game designers that began in 2014, known as Gamergate, became so pervasive — including threats of rape, torture and murder — that some women hired security or went into hiding.

Online harassment has also been used globally to attack journalists, dissidents and others in the public arena.

Political consultant Maria Cardona began receiving nasty emails and direct messages once she began presenting her opinions on national news shows. She's noticed that many of her critics seem focused on the idea that an outspoken Latina woman could be considered an authority on politics.

One typical message read: "I hope you get raped and have your throat slit."

"They want to shut us up, they want to scare us, they want to intimidate us," said Cardona, who now keeps her office locked after someone showed up to ac-

cost her in person.

Anonymity can make it easier to be cruel without fear of offline repercussions. It's a phenomenon called the online disinhibition effect, and it's one reason why trolls feel comfortable saying things they would never say to someone in person. As part of a 2009 settlement of Heller's lawsuit against her harassers, she asked to meet them face to face. One was a 17-year-old boy who had posted that he'd like to gouge Heller's eyes out and have sex with her corpse.

"They all essentially said the same thing: that they didn't realize their actions were impacting a person in that way, that they didn't realize there was a person on the other side of the screen," Heller recalled. "And they all said, 'I am so sorry.'"

California enacted the nation's first law against cyberbullying in 1999, and most states have since followed suit. Enforcement can be difficult, however, as the lines between ha-

arrassment and free speech can be blurry. Police and prosecutors often lack sufficient training or resources. Tech companies say they are getting better at identifying and stopping harassment. For example, Instagram, which is owned by Facebook parent company Meta, made several changes designed to reduce harassment, including putting warning labels on potentially abusive language and making it easier to block or report harassers. Yet those moves haven't been enough. Internal Facebook documents leaked by former employee Frances Haugen show that executives are aware of the potential for their products to be used to harass people. One internal study cited 13.5% of teen girls saying Instagram exacerbates suicidal thoughts and 17% saying it worsens eating disorders.

"Online harassment is a problem for everybody, but I think it's especially problematic for kids," said Natalie Bazarova, a professor at Cornell University who studies social media.

She said a multifaceted approach is required to address the problem: legislation to require minimum safeguards from tech companies, technical innovations and extensive educational efforts such as simulations that teach teens to spot cyberbullying and use social media safely.

Technical solutions include automated systems that flag posts for signs of harassing language — all-capital letters, repetitive phrases, certain key words — or instituting a short delay before users can respond to posts, giving them a chance to cool off.

Now in its "awkward adolescence," the internet is not the first invention to change how humans communicate, Heller said.

"People said similar things about the telegraph, the telephone and the television — that they were somehow going to ruin society," she said. "They were all regulated about 25 years into their life cycle. Those regulations didn't kill the telephone, the television or the radio." □

Investigation: Zinke misused position as Interior secretary

By MATTHEW BROWN

Associated Press

BILLINGS, Mont. (AP) —

Former U.S. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke misused his position to advance a commercial development project that included a microbrewery in his Montana hometown and lied to an agency ethics official about his involvement in the project, according to a report by federal investigators released Wednesday. The investigation by the Interior Department's inspector general found that Zinke continued working on the commercial project through a non-profit foundation in the resort community of Whitefish, Montana even after he committed upon taking office to break ties with the foundation. The report also said that Zinke gave incorrect and incomplete information to an Interior Department ethics official who confronted him over his involvement, and that Zinke ordered Interior Department staff to help him with the project in a misuse of his position.

The Great Northern Veterans Peace Park Foundation was created by Zinke and others in 2007 to build a community sledding hill in Whitefish, a tourist town



In this Dec. 11, 2018 file photo, then-Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke speaks at EPA headquarters in Washington.

Associated Press

about 25 miles (40 kilometers) from Glacier National Park and near the Montana-Canada border. The BNSF Railway company donated several acres of land to the foundation in 2008 to establish the park. After being named Interior secretary in 2017, Zinke agreed to cut ties with the foundation and to stop providing it with his services.

But after resigning as the foundation's president and while he was employed as the Interior Secretary, Zinke engaged in "repeated, on-

going substantive negotiations" with developers about the use of foundation property for a commercial project known as 95 Karrow, investigators said. The project included a potential microbrewery. Zinke is a candidate in the June Republican primary for an open Montana Congressional seat, a position he held prior to joining former President Donald Trump's cabinet.

His campaign blasted the investigative report as "a political hit job" and said

in a statement that the involvement of Zinke's family with the foundation led to the restoration of railroad land into a park where children can sled.

"They are proud of the children's sledding park that dozens of kids use every weekend and countless locals use for exercise every day," the campaign statement said.

The department's inspector general's office — led by Inspector General Mark Greenblatt, a Trump nominee — referred the results

of the Zinke investigation to federal prosecutors for potential prosecution.

But the prosecutors who work for Attorney General Merrick Garland, appointed by President Joe Biden, declined to pursue criminal charges in the summer of 2021, according to the investigative report.

Zinke and his wife, Lola, declined interview requests from federal investigators who were looking into the land deal.

Emails and text messages from others who were involved in the development project show that Zinke continued to communicate with developers even after resigning from the foundation in March 2017 and days after he was confirmed as secretary, according to investigators. The messages were obtained through subpoenas to the developers, who the report does not name.

"The evidence that we obtained reflected that Secretary Zinke exchanged at least 64 emails and text messages and engaged in multiple phone calls in which he represented the Foundation in negotiations related to the 95 Karrow project," investigators wrote. □

Black lawmaker sues anti-abortion group over racist threat

By JOHN RABY

CHARLESTON, W.Va. (AP)

— West Virginia's only Black female lawmaker has filed a lawsuit against an anti-abortion group, citing a racist Facebook post and a racist email she said she received for supporting legislation that would remove all restrictions on abortion. Delegate Danielle Walker filed the lawsuit Tuesday in Kanawha County Circuit Court against West Virginians for Life and Richard Demoske, who resigned as president of the group's Berkeley County chapter after he admitted posting the image of a Ku Klux Klansman on the group's Facebook page. The post targeted Walker by name. Walker said she remains in fear for her life and wears

protective safety gear. The lawsuit alleges that the email and Facebook post were "authored and posted" by West Virginians for Life and "constitute the modern-day digital equivalent of burning a cross in Delegate Walker's front yard."

Walker, a Monongalia County Democrat, is co-sponsoring the legislation to repeal all abortion restrictions in West Virginia. A mother, she has spoken publicly about having an abortion in the past.

"These digital communications were and are designed by West Virginians for Life to harass, intimidate, and strike me with fear of violence if I continue my support of a woman's right to choose," Walker said in a

statement.

West Virginians for Life did not immediately respond to a telephone message seeking comment on the lawsuit Wednesday. Demoske resigned earlier this month from the chapter after admitting his action violated the group's bylaws. He did not have a listed telephone number and did not immediately respond to a Facebook message from the AP.

The lawsuit seeks unspecified damages through a jury trial and asks for a restraining order to prohibit the defendants from further contact with Walker.

In contrast to Walker's proposed measure, the Republican-led West Virginia House of Delegates passed a bill Tuesday that



Democratic Del. Danielle Walker, a former abortion patient, speaks at a press conference at the West Virginia state Capitol in Charleston, W.Va. on Jan. 31, 2022 about a bill she's proposing that would lift restrictions on abortion in the state.

Associated Press

would ban abortion after 15 weeks, a piece of legislation almost identical to the Mississippi law currently under review by the U.S. Su-

preme Court.

The legislation will now move on to the state Senate, which is also dominated by Republicans. □

Biden orders release of Trump White House logs to Congress

By COLLEEN LONG

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden is ordering the release of Trump White House visitor logs to the House committee investigating the riot of Jan. 6, 2021, once more rejecting former President Donald Trump's claims of executive privilege.

The committee has sought a trove of data from the National Archives, including presidential records that Trump had fought to keep private. The records being released to Congress are visitor logs showing appointment information for individuals who were allowed to enter the White House on the day of the insurrection.

In a letter sent Monday to the National Archives, White House counsel Dana Remus said Biden had considered Trump's claim that because he was president at the time of the attack on the U.S. Capitol, the records should remain private, but decided that it was "not in the best interest of the United States" to do so.

She also noted that as a matter of policy, the Biden administration "voluntarily discloses such visitor logs on a monthly basis," as did



President Donald Trump holds up papers as he speaks about the coronavirus in the James Brady Press Briefing Room of the White House on April 20, 2020, in Washington.

Associated Press

the Obama administration, and that the majority of the entries over which Trump asserted the claim would be publicly released under the current policy.

A Trump spokesman did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the decision.

The Presidential Records Act mandates that records made by a sitting president and his staff be preserved in the National Archives, and

an outgoing president is responsible for turning over documents to the agency when leaving office. Trump tried but failed to withhold White House documents from the House committee in a dispute that was decided by the Supreme Court.

Biden has already made clear that he is not invoking executive privilege concerning the congressional investigation unless

he absolutely must. Biden has waived that privilege for much other information requested by the committee, which is going through the material and obtaining documents and testimony from witnesses, including some uncooperative ones. The committee is focused on Trump's actions from Jan. 6, when he waited hours to tell his supporters to stop the violence and leave the Capitol. Investi-

gators are also interested in the organization and financing of a Washington rally the morning of the riot, when Trump told supporters to "fight like hell." Among the unanswered questions is how close organizers of the rally coordinated with White House officials.

Investigators also are seeking communications between the National Archives and Trump's aides about 15 boxes of records that the agency recovered from Trump at his Florida resort and are trying to learn what they contained.

Meanwhile, White House call logs obtained so far by the House committee do not list calls made by Trump as he watched the violence unfold on television on Jan. 6, nor do they list calls made directly to the president.

That lack of information about Trump's personal calls is a particular challenge as the investigators work to discern what the then-president was doing in the White House as supporters violently beat police, broke into the Capitol and interrupted the congressional certification of Democrat Joe Biden's election victory. □

Marijuana bill spurs water rights debate in arid New Mexico



In this April 6, 2018 photo, are the leaves of a marijuana plant inside a cultivation greenhouse in Bernalillo, N.M.

Associated Press

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) — Hispanic farmers and rural residents in New Mexico are concerned legislation that would allow small cannabis producers to significantly boost their plant counts lacks a provision to

ensure the producers have valid water rights.

An organization that represents traditional irrigation systems across the state, Latino and Native American agriculture groups and environmentalists are call-

ing on lawmakers to restore what they say is critical language aimed at protecting limited water resources. A House committee is scheduled to consider the bill Wednesday. The push comes in the waning hours of the legislative session that ends at midday Thursday.

The arid state already is struggling to meet its water demands. Experts have warned lawmakers throughout the session that supplies are expected to dwindle even more in the coming years as drought and warmer temperatures linked to climate change persist across the West.

Supporters of the legislation have described the water rights requirement as "red tape" that is keeping micro businesses from entering

the recreational marijuana industry.

However, critics worry that without the requirement, the illegal use of water could go unchecked as the industry takes off in New Mexico. They point to problems elsewhere, including California where water theft by illegal marijuana growers has helped to suck dry local aquifers, leaving legitimate users without water.

Paula Garcia, head of the New Mexico Acequia Association, said it's a matter of equity. She said Native American and senior water rights holders in New Mexico are from historically underserved and marginalized communities and they stand to be put at greater risk of having their rights impaired.

"New Mexico is now in an era of long-term aridification, where we need more careful stewardship of our limited water resources and cultural integrity," she said in a letter sent Tuesday to members of the House. "By removing the water protections, rural entities — such as mutual domestics and acequias who are entrusted with managing water at the local level — will bear the burden of enforcement. This would put our precious water resources at risk."

The water rights requirement had been a key component of last year's debate in New Mexico to legalize the production, sale and use of recreational cannabis for adults. Retail sales are scheduled to begin April 1. □

Doubting Russian exit, NATO looks to bolster its defenses

By LORNE COOK

BRUSSELS (AP) — NATO member countries on Wednesday examined new ways to bolster the defenses of nations on the organization's eastern flank as Russia's military buildup around Ukraine fuels one of Europe's biggest security crises in decades.

Over two days at NATO headquarters in Brussels, defense ministers were to discuss how and when to rapidly dispatch troops and equipment to countries closest to Russia and the Black Sea region should Moscow order an invasion of Ukraine.

U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and his counterparts also plan to weigh the possibility of stationing troops longer-term in southeast Europe, possibly starting later this year. The troops would mirror the presence of some 5,000 servicemembers that have been stationed in allies Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland on a rotating basis in recent years.

The U.S. has started to deploy 5,000 troops to Poland and Romania. Britain is sending hundreds of soldiers to Poland and offering more warships and planes. Germany, the Netherlands and Norway are sending additional troops to Lithuania.

Denmark and Spain are providing jets for air policing.

"The fact that we have deployed more NATO troops on the ground, more naval assets, more aircraft, all of that sends a very clear message," NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said. "I think there is no room for any miscalculation in Moscow about our commitment to defending allies."

The deployment has come in response to a formidable challenge.

Over the last four months, Russia is estimated to have amassed around 60% of its entire land forces and a significant portion of its air force to the north and east of Ukraine, as well as in neighboring Belarus. Moscow has appeared ready



NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg bangs a gavel to signify the start of a round table meeting of the North Atlantic Council at NATO headquarters in Brussels, Wednesday, Feb. 16, 2022.

to repeat its 2014 invasion of Ukraine, but on a grander scale. q

Russian President Vladimir Putin wants NATO, the world's biggest security organization, to stop expanding. He demands that the U.S.-led alliance pull its troops and equipment out of countries that joined after 1997 — almost half of NATO's 30-strong ranks. NATO cannot accept his terms. It's founding treaty commits to an "Open Door" policy for European countries that want to join, and a mutual defense clause guarantees that all members will come to the defense of an ally under threat.

Ukraine, though, is not a member and NATO, as an organization, is not willing to come to its defense.

"We have to understand that Ukraine is a partner. We support Ukraine. But for all NATO allies, we provide 100% security guarantees," Stoltenberg told reporters ahead of Wednesday's meeting.

That said, some member countries are helping Ukraine more directly, such as the U.S., Britain and Canada.

"We will be providing both lethal and non-lethal aid to Ukraine. This is a very significant issue for us all," Cana-

dian Defense Minister Anita Anand said.

But the "massive costs" promised to Putin should he order an invasion would be economic and political, mostly in the form of sanc-

tions, which are not part of NATO's remit. The alliance has offered Russia a series of security talks, including on arms control.

Over the last two days, Russia has said that it was re-

turning some troops and weapons to bases, but Stoltenberg said the allies saw no concrete sign of a drawdown and concern that that Russia might invade Ukraine persists.

"They have always moved forces back and forth, so just that we see movement of forces, that doesn't confirm a real withdrawal," Stoltenberg said. "The trend of the last weeks and months has been a steady increase in the Russian capabilities close to Ukraine's borders."

He said the ministers agreed for military commanders to come up with new options for strengthening NATO's defenses in southeast Europe near Romania.

"Moscow has made it clear that it is prepared to contest the fundamental principles that have underpinned our security for decades, and to do so by using force. I regret to say that this is the new normal in Europe," Stoltenberg said. □

Associated Press



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Key energy agencies diverge as demand and oil prices climb

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Leaders of the world's most consequential energy bodies gathered for a forum Wednesday to discuss the uncertain future of oil as demand rebounds and prices climb, all while a growing roster of nations pledge to transition to cleaner forms of energy. The forum, which included speakers from the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, the International Energy Agency and the International Energy Forum, presented varying forecasts for oil demand and discussed energy security and market stability. Yet from the outset, the wider debate on how the world should best transition away from so-called dirty fuels and other sources of carbon emissions that pollute the air played out as speakers gave their remarks.

Major oil-producing nations, like Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, have long argued that a rapid energy transition away from the fossil fuels that they continue to rely on for revenue will impact global economic growth and hurt the world's poorest. Those backing a fast-tracked transition insist new



Saudi Aramco engineers and journalists look at the Hawiyah Natural Gas Liquids Recovery Plant, which is designed to process 4.0 billion standard cubic feet per day of sweet gas, a natural gas that does not contain significant amounts of hydrogen sulfide, in Hawiyah, in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia, June 28, 2021.

investments in energy must go toward expanding existing wind and solar solutions and in funding innovative solutions if the world is to avoid catastrophic global warming levels. On both sides, however, there is agreement that the world is far from reaching sustainable targets as demand for energy grows.

"We are not on track. So how should policy makers

respond to this dilemma? The reality is that 80% of the world's energy needs continue to be met by fossil fuels," said Joseph McMonigle, secretary general of the Saudi-based International Energy Forum that hosted the symposium. The IEF is the largest organization of energy ministers, with 71 member states, including the United States. McMonigle said global en-

ergy demand has "roared back" to pre-pandemic levels, but that investments in oil and gas are not back to where they were before the COVID-19 crisis.

"Disinvestment in energy supply will not deliver a just and orderly transition and cannot be a response to the climate crisis," he said, arguing that countries should invest in both greener forms of energy as well

as fossil fuels.

The IEF has called for oil and gas investment to reach \$525 billion through 2030 to ensure "market balance" despite a slowdown projected in how much demand for oil will grow. The group notes that investment in the oil and gas sector in 2021 stood at \$341 billion. Without more financing, the IEF says demand could outstrip future supply within the next five to six years. They say it could also result in switching to more polluting energy sources such as wood and coal.

Others disagree. The International Energy Agency's executive director has said the world does not need more investments in new oil, gas and coal projects.

From Paris, the IEA's Fatih Birol did not directly address the comments made by McMonigle, but he echoed the sentiment that the energy transition must happen in an "orderly manner" so that climate targets are met and oil producing economies are seen as part of the solution.

To meet these targets, the world must reduce its consumption of fossil fuels, Birol said, before later adding: "We cannot drop oil and gas tomorrow." □

Associated Press

Pelosi in Jerusalem: U.S. support for Israel is 'ironclad'

Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — American support for Israel remains "ironclad," U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi told members of Israel's parliament Wednesday, despite deep differences between the nations on Iran, peace with the Palestinians and other issues. Pelosi stuck to what the U.S. and Israel have in common, particularly on their desires to rein in Iran's nuclear capabilities and find a path toward peace with the Palestinians.

"The U.S. remains ironclad, I keep using that word, in our support of Israel's security and its regional stability," Pelosi said with her counterpart, Knesset Speaker Mick-

ey Levy, standing nearby. The face-to-face diplomacy came at a tense time in the nations' relationship as talks about a deal to rein in Iran's nuclear capabilities drag on in Vienna. U.S. President Joe Biden campaigned on renewing and expanding the Iran nuclear deal after former President Donald Trump, with strong encouragement from then-Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, withdrew the United States in 2018. Since then, the U.S. has reimposed sanctions and Iran has stepped up its nuclear activities, amassing a stockpile of highly enriched uranium that goes well beyond the bounds of the accord.

Israel has said it will not be bound by any international agreement concerning Iran's nuclear program, and says it is prepared to take military action if needed to prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear arms. Iran insists its nuclear program is solely for peaceful purposes.

Standing before a vibrant mural in the Knesset's Chagall Hall, Pelosi said Israel and the U.S. remain concerned about the same threat from Iran and its proxies.

"We are together in the fight against terrorism posed by Iran, both in the region and also its nuclear development," she said. "The nuclear threat of Iran



U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, center, lays a wreath during an official welcome ceremony at the Knesset, the Israeli Parliament in Jerusalem Wednesday, Feb. 16, 2022.

Associated Press

is a global one...Israel's proximity to Iran is of concern to all of us."

Pelosi, 81, also raised the Biden administration's commitment to Palestinian statehood at a time when Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett opposes the idea.

"Our delegation is also here to reaffirm America's commitment to a just and enduring two state solution, one that embraces, enhances stability and security for Israel, Palestinians and their neighbors," Pelosi said. □

Brazil mudslides from torrential rains kill at least 58

By DIARLEI RODRIGUES and
DAVID BILLER

Associated Press

PETROPOLIS, Brazil (AP) —

The death toll from devastating mudslides and floods that swept through a mountainous region of Rio de Janeiro state has reached 58, local authorities said Wednesday.

The city of Petropolis was slammed by a deluge on Tuesday, and Mayor Rubens Bomtempo said the number of dead could rise as searchers pick through the wreckage. Twenty-one people had been recovered alive.

Civilians joined the official recovery efforts early Wednesday. Among them were Priscila Neves and her siblings, who looked through the mud for any sign of their disappeared parents, but found only clothing. Neves told The Associated Press she had given up hope of finding her parents alive. And Rosilene Virgilio, 49, was in tears as she recalled the desperate pleas from someone she couldn't save. "There was a woman screaming, 'Help! Get me out of here!'



Rescue workers remove the body of a mudslide victim in Petropolis, Brazil, Wednesday, Feb. 16, 2022.

But we couldn't do anything; the water was gushing out, the mud was gushing out," Virgilio told The Associated Press. "Our city unfortunately is finished."

Petropolis is a German-influenced city named for a former Brazilian emperor. Nestled in the mountains above the coastal metropolis, for almost two centuries it has been a refuge for

people escaping summer heat and tourists keen to explore the so-called "Imperial City."

Petropolis was among the nation's first planned cities and features stately homes along its waterways. But its population has grown haphazardly, climbing mountainsides now covered with small residences packed tightly together. Many are

in areas unfit for structures and rendered more vulnerable by deforestation and inadequate drainage.

The stricken mountain region has seen similar catastrophes in recent decades, including one that caused more than 900 deaths. In the years since, Petropolis presented a plan to reduce risks of landslides, but works have been advancing only

slowly.

Gov. Claudio Castro told reporters on Wednesday that the situation "was almost like war" and that he was mustering all the state government's heavy machinery to help dig out the buried area. The state fire department said late Tuesday the area received 25.8 centimeters (just over 10 inches) of rain within three hours Tuesday almost as much as during the previous 30 days combined. Petropolis' civil defense authority said moderate rain was expected Wednesday afternoon and evening.

Video posted on social media Tuesday showed cars and houses being dragged away by landslides, and water swirling through Petropolis and neighboring districts.

The Globo television network on Wednesday showed houses buried beneath mud in areas firefighters hadn't yet been able to access. Several streets remained inaccessible as cars and household goods piled up, blocking access to higher parts of the city. □

Associated Press

Cuba begins public consultation on marriage equality law

HAVANA (AP) — Cuba's leaders have launched an unusual series of neighborhood meetings across the island to debate a measure that would legalize same-sex marriage and adoption, a measure that pits the daughter of former President Raul Castro against a growing evangelical movement.

The planned 78,000 meetings, which officially began at the start of February but are only now being seen in practice, were called by Cuba's parliament to discuss the content of a proposal and gather public comment by the end of April. That will be used to draft a final version to be put to a public referendum at a yet to be determined date.

While there is no debate in the meetings comments can be expressed in writing or verbally, with no argu-

ment or vote the measure and others like it before have roused an unusually strong discussion in society as a whole.

While gay rights are the most debated part of the proposed law, its more than 400 articles cover all sorts of family topics, including the rights of grandparents and grandchildren, protection of the elderly, punishment of gender violence and how the law deals with marriage and parental responsibility.

It would give children gradually greater rights as they grow.

Such a vast consultation on pending legislation is rare in Cuba though a similar process preceded adoption of the country's new constitution in 2019.

About 200 people attended a meeting in front of a house in Havana witnessed by The Associated Press.

The National Anthem was sung, the Cuban flag displayed.

Heidi Sanchez, a nursing assistant, said she like the change "because it includes everyone in the world: children, the elderly, people of the same sex."

"We are all human beings and Cubans.

I don't see anything abnormal."

Rosmary Rivera, a 29-year-old housewife, said she was basically in favor of same-sex marriage, "as long as they maintain their privacy."

She said she'd prefer not to have gay neighbors, though, because "it looks ugly," especially "when there are children."

A prime supporter of the measure is Mariela Castro, director of the National Center for Sex Education and a promoter of rights for same-sex couples, as well



Residents attend a popular consultation to discuss the draft of a new family code, in Havana, Cuba, Friday, Feb. 11, 2022.

Associated Press

as being daughter of the former president and revolutionary leader.

"It gives me much hope that in spite of how difficult and contradictory the processes of social transformation have been ... we have reached this moment

of a (family) code so advanced, so revolutionary," she told reporters recently. But beyond the revolutionary government, there's a strong strain of social conservatism in Cuba, where evangelical churches have been growing. □



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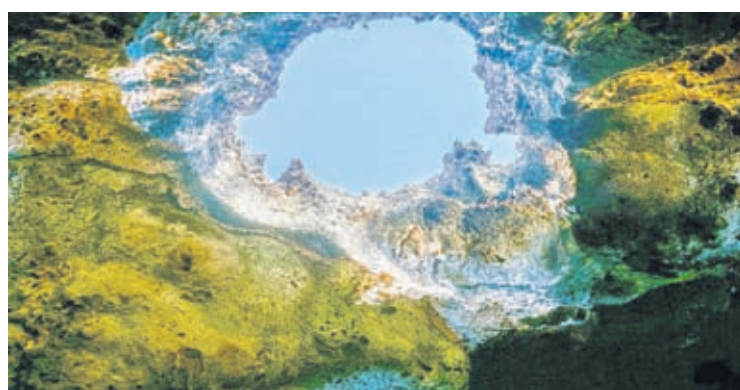
ORANJESTAD — Aruba Today collected some things to do **BEYOND** the beach. Yes, we know. Aruba, located 15 miles north of Venezuela in the warm waters of the southern Caribbean, is home to beautiful white-sand beaches, 82-degree days, and thus ideal for the perfect beach day. But we are also blessed with some of the warmest people in the world and our island is 19.6 miles long and 6 miles across, with a total area of 70 square miles. Bit more to discover than the white stretch on the coastline we say. Let's mention some of these hidden gems.

Arikok National Park

The Arikok National park is worth the ride. We love the hikes that are guided by

the park's rangers whose job is to maintain trails and protect natural resources. The flora and fauna are beautiful and the historical sites tell you about the island's indigenous roots. The guided tours are even free of charge. If you are not up to walking, you can drive through the park, one way or another this park is a great place to spend an entire day. Cruising

through the landscape you end up at some of the most stunning beaches like Dos Playa or Daimara Beach. In Total the park consists of 7907 acres protected nature with a richness of animals living in it. The Aruban whiptail lizard (cododo), Aruban cat eye snake (santanero) and endangered rattle snake (cascabel) are just some of them, you can also admire these



close in the park's Visitors' Center. For more information, visit the website www.arubanationalpark.org

Natural Bridge

One of Aruba's favorite tourist attractions is the Natural Bridge. For thousands of years, pounding waves and strong winds have slowly chiseled away the limestone cliffs along Aruba's north coast to create several natural bridges. The largest of these bridges used to be the famous Natural Bridge. The bridge was a formation of coral limestone cut out by years of pounding surf, and was one of the largest of these types of spans in the world. It stood some 23 feet (7 meters) above sea level and spans more than 100 feet (30 meters). Unfortunately the bridge collapsed on September 2, 2005. Despite this, it is still the most photographed natural bridge and it remains a popular tourist attraction in Aruba, with the adjacent and intact Baby Bridge also meriting a visit.

The Natural Bridge is the perfect stop while touring Aruba. There is no admission fee or set hours for visiting. Quench your thirst with refreshing beverages & refuel your tank with local snacks.

The Lourdes Grotto

Named in commemoration of the famous French religious landmark, was created under the guidance of a priest named "Erkamp" and parishioners in the year 1958. The grotto, a shrine built into the rocks is located in Seroe Preto, just off the main road to San Nicolas.

A statue of the Virgin Mary, weighing 700 kilos, was hoisted into place in the grotto. Every year, on February 11 (feast of Lady of Lourdes), a procession leaves from the St. Theresa church in San Nicolas to the grotto, where a mass is performed. The grotto is located road-side and can be visited daily. Just make sure you park safely in the event you wish to stop for pictures at this location. □



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Holiday Inn Resort Aruba: Because love never ends

PALM BEACH — Holiday Inn Resort Aruba showers you with love to celebrate the most important event of your life: your wedding. Whether it is a small, intimate happening between the two of you, a gathering with your closest friends and family or a larger group, the resort has it covered. There is one woman who will guide you through it all, from the start to the end. She assures you that everything is arranged for up to the tiniest details, just the way you imagined it. Let us introduce to you Shulaika Isenia, Holiday Inn's wedding specialist. "I am here to make it happen!"

Her calm appearance and skilled way ease every nervous bride-to-be or worried future groom. Shulaika works thorough in a subtle and open minded way. "It is very important to listen close to my client's wishes. To observe and know all the details, that is where it all starts with. My task is to translate the client's wishes into reality to full satisfaction." Her job is to make things easy, take away the stress and she is great at that.

From A to Z

The process begins with contacting the Holiday Inn Resort Aruba where you will be connected to Shulaika. The Holiday Inn Resort Aruba is flexible and details

can be adjusted to your personal taste. "Picture yourself and your loved one on the turquoise blue ocean side where it feels as if the beach is all yours. Our resort has this great advantage to be able to offer our wedding guests their 'own corner' where they have the full bar area for themselves, located right on the wide beach." Holiday Inn Aruba Resorts stands out with their personal approach and upscale service and their Food & Beverage is known all over the island for its consistent quality, quite important on the day of your life. "After the night the resort has their wedding suite made up for you and this means awakening in the romance of the Caribbean sun next morning with the ocean and white-sanded beach stretching in front of you while you enjoy your breakfast." Three romantic wedding packages offer you amazing possibilities where you can be each other's sunshine under Aruba's beautiful blue skies and turquoise waters, witnessing your "I do's" in a very intimate ceremony (package My Sunshine) or make your special day unique with a group of 20 loved ones, to share the event where you promise to love and stay with each other forever and always with your inner circle (package Promises). If you would like to take it up a



notch then tie the knot where love transcends all barriers and all limits, let Holiday Inn Aruba Resort be the one to make this act of overflowing love happen in one of a kind way (package Love Unlimited). Important to mention is that Shulaika and her team are flexible and arrangements can be adjusted to fulfill your exact wishes.

All arrangements by the Holiday Inn Aruba Resort include marriage on the stunning beach with the services of a non-denominational minister, including a wedding certificate as a keepsake. Feel queen and king under the arch of squared bamboo or a circular arch with choice of drapery color and crystals, depending on your choice of package. The signing table, bridal bouquet, matching groom's boutonniere are all part of the life happening and a live

musician, photographer and/or videographer are options to consider.

Don't worry, be happy

Put your faith in the hands of Shulaika and her team to organize your vow renewal, engagement or wedding, she will gain your trust in an instant. The island of Aruba and the Holiday Inn Aruba Resort will make you feel secure as all Covid-19 protocol is in place here and your safety is our priority. Discover Aruba, live your dream event at the Holiday Inn Aruba Resort. We promise you: the resort and the island will make sure you will remember this a lifetime!

For more information:

Contact Shulaika Isenia at +297 586 3600 or send an email to shulaika.isenia@ihg.com.





ORANJESTAD - On Tuesday, February 15, 2022, the State Secretary for Kingdom Relations, Mrs. Alexandra van Huffelen, had an audience with the Governor of Aru-

First audience Ms. van Huffelen at Cas Ceremonial di Gobernador Aruba

ba, His Excellency Alfonso Boekhoudt.

Since the end of last week the new State Secretary has been paying a working visit to all Caribbean (egg) countries of the Kingdom. It is the first time that the State Secretary and the Governor meet in person. Previously there has been contact by telephone and

video conference.

During the audience at Cas Ceremonial the implementation of the Land Package Aruba, the standardization of top incomes and the refinancing of the Dutch loans were discussed. Ms. Van Huffelen was accompanied during this visit by Mr. Henk Brons, Director General of King-

dom Relations, Ms. Saskia de Reuver, Director of Kingdom Relations/Countries and Mr. David Abrahams, Deputy Representative of the Netherlands in Aruba. On Thursday late afternoon the delegation will leave for St. Maarten. □

Photo courtesy of Cabinet of the Governor Aruba

Foundation “Ban uni man pa cria nos muchanan” needs a helping hand Feeding the needy children of Aruba every school day

ORANJESTAD — “Ban uni man pa cria nos muchanan” is a foundation whose goal it is to provide the needy children of Aruba with a breakfast every school day. A breakfast which consists of a sandwich and a drink (juice or milk). It is an independent foundation, receiving no subsidy whatsoever from the government.

The program started at the beginning of the 2001/2002 schoolyear as a community service project of the Facility Department of the Dr. Horacio E. Oduber Hospital, with 138 children. At the closing of the schoolyear 320 children were enrolled and this kept growing steadily each year. The

2019 schoolyear started with 650 children but as the schools reopened after the peak of the pandemic, the number of children grew to a staggering 794 children at the closing of the 2019-2020 schoolyear! These children are from 57 elementary schools all over the island. This number also includes about 70 children of the Traimerdia project, which is an after school program. For over 20 years the foundation has been providing breakfast to children of elementary schools but they are aiming on some day also be able to provide kindergartens and high schools, seeing that there are many children in need.

The breakfast program is a sponsorship program; although the sponsors are encouraged to donate Fls 25.00 per month, the actual cost per child has doubled. Leaning towards Fls. 50.00 per month. Simple arithmetic shows that the current 450 sponsors are not enough. At Fls 50.00 per month it takes 800 sponsors to keep the program running – or a combination of sponsors and donations. Due to the effect of the pandemic and the increase in consumption prices the foundation is expecting a big deficit for the new school year of 2021-2022. If they don't manage to get sufficient funds they will have to reduce the amount of children to



600, meaning that at least 200 children won't be able to receive a breakfast this year and they would have to make the difficult decision in choosing who will stay on the list and who to remove. The foundation

will keep working hard and do their utmost on getting these funds but they need the help of the community.

If you feel inspired by this article, do not just turn the page but act upon it. You can help and support this wonderful foundation by making a donation to their bank account at the following banks: CMB 22559501, RBC 43.65.011 and at the Aruba Bank 2516290190.

For more information, or to receive a transcript of the Chamber of Commerce, the By-Laws or the latest Financial Report (2020-2021) of the foundation, please contact Mrs. Rachelle Roos at +297-527-4000 or Mrs. Felicia Halman at +297- 527-4750 or Mr. John Fun (President) at +297-527-4711 or at +297-699-4330.

Your support will help the children of this program at least have a breakfast every day. □



Avoid the risks of having multiple buy now, pay later loans

By **JACKIE VELING** of Nerd-Wallet

"Buy now, pay later" promises simple payment plans that can make financing your next purchase easy and affordable.

These plans typically divide your total purchase into four equal installments with zero interest. The first installment is due at checkout, and the remaining three are due every two weeks until the loan is paid in full. But even a simple payment plan can turn complicated when you're juggling three or four of them at a time — a problem unique to buy now, pay later, which unlike other forms of financing, doesn't look at similar existing debts when extending an offer.

KNOW THE RISKS OF MULTIPLE BUY NOW, PAY LATER LOANS

While certain debts like credit cards and traditional loans are reported to the three major credit bureaus, buy now, pay later loans typically aren't, so lenders don't know how many loans you have outstanding and can't assess your ability to afford more. This will likely change in the coming months as TransUnion, Equifax and Experian work to



In this June 15, 2018, file photo, cash is fanned out from a wallet in North Andover, Mass.

Associated Press

increase the visibility of buy now, pay later on credit reports to better track the loans across lenders, while still protecting the credit scores of consumers who may be taking out multiple loans in a short period of time and successfully paying them off.

For now, borrowers can continue taking on debt from multiple buy now, pay later providers. And though plans may be advertised as no-cost, the consequences

of falling behind are anything but, says Marisabel Torres, director of California policy for the Center for Responsible Lending, a non-profit research and policy organization.

"There needs to be more transparency," she says. "It's not just, 'zero financing, zero fees.' If you miss a payment, you will incur fees. You will incur some type of penalty."

While many buy now, pay later providers charge late

fees, which can dig borrowers further into debt, others send defaulted loans to collections, jeopardizing borrowers' credit scores. There are also consequences on the other side of the transaction. Even if a buy now, pay later provider doesn't penalize you for falling behind, your bank might if you overdraw an account tied to the loan, like a debit card.

"Could you be triggering nonsufficient fund fees or

overdraft fees? Could you be kicked out of the banking system? Those are very real consequences that are tied to not being able to keep up with a loan payment," Torres says.

ESTABLISH A BUDGET FOR BUY NOW, PAY LATER PAYMENTS

For borrowers who take multiple buy now, pay later loans, the most important thing to do is plan your spending ahead of time, says Jordan Nietzel, a certified financial planner based in Columbia, Missouri.

If you don't already follow a monthly budget, start by reviewing your income and expenses over the past three months to identify how much money is coming in and going out.

Assuming there's a surplus of income you want to spend on buy now, pay later purchases, set a total dollar limit for what you can commit to monthly payments, instead of evaluating loan offers individually. Nietzel says looking at buy now, pay later loans as a whole is particularly important since the small installments make the debt seem more manageable than it is. □

U.S. accuses China of backing away from free-trade commitments

By **PAUL WISEMAN**
AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The United States has accused China of failing to meet its commitments to the World Trade Organization and says it is exploring new ways to combat aggressive Chinese trade practices. In its annual report on Chinese compliance with WTO rules, the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative said Wednesday that China isn't keeping the promises it made to open its markets to foreign competition when it joined the 164-country Geneva-based agency in 2001.

"China has instead retained and expanded its state-led, non-market approach to the economy and trade," said U.S. Trade Representative Katherine

Tai. "China's policies and practices challenge the premise of the WTO's rules and cause serious harm to workers and businesses around the world."

Among other things, the United States repeated longstanding accusations that China uses subsidies and regulations to favor its own companies at the expense of foreign competitors; floods world markets with cheap steel, aluminum and other products; and forces U.S. and other foreign companies to hand over prized technology as the price of access to Chinese markets.

The U.S. report said: "China's leadership appears confident in its state-led, non-market approach to the economy and trade and feels no need to con-

form to global norms."

The U.S. trade office said it is continuing to talk to China about "obtaining real change in its economic and trade regime." And it is working with allies — and through the WTO — to put pressure on the Chinese government. Without offering specifics, the report said the U.S. is also exploring new ways "to use domestic trade tools strategically as needed in order to achieve a more level playing field with China for U.S. workers and businesses."

Voicing similar complaints about China, President Donald Trump slapped taxes on about \$360 billion worth of Chinese imports to the United States — tariffs the Biden administration is still imposing.

To reduce tensions, the



Shipping containers are seen at a port of Kwai Tsing Container Terminals in Hong Kong, Friday, Nov. 5, 2021.

Associated Press

U.S. and China reached a so-called Phase 1 trade agreement in January 2020. Among other things, the Chinese agreed to step up purchases of U.S. farm exports — benefiting Trump supporters in the American

heartland.

But Chad Bown of the Peterson Institute for International Trade calculated in a report last week that China has bought only 57% of U.S. exports it had to committed to purchase. □

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

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Yesterday's answer

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2-17

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three I's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

2-17

CRYPTOQUOTE

J O U O M D J X V B X A O G E Y F

X I M F M X F M D D L Y V L U Z B

Y F B J O M F W E X V U J O Y F J O U

O M D J X V B X A O G E Y F U V V X V D.

— P X Z J Y M V U

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: MAN IS AN IMITATIVE CREATURE, AND WHOEVER IS FOREMOST LEADS THE HERD. FRIEDRICH SCHILLER

U.N. to finalize science report on how warming hits home hard



People visit a thermometer on July 11, 2021, in Death Valley National Park, Calif.

Associated Press

By SETH BORENSTEIN and FRANK JORDANS

BERLIN (AP)—Scientists and governments met Monday to finalize a major U.N. report on how global warming disrupts people's lives, their natural environment and the Earth itself. Don't expect a flowery valentine to the planet: instead an activist group predicted "a nightmare painted in the dry language of science." The United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, a collection of hundreds of the world's top scientists, issues three huge reports on climate change every five to seven years. The latest update, which won't be finished until the end of February, will explain how climate change already affects humans and the planet, what to expect in the future, and the risks and benefits of adapting to a warmer world.

"We're concerned that the physical climate around us is changing," said panel co-chair Debra Roberts, a South African environmental scientist. "But for most people in their day-to-day lives... they want to know: so what? What does

it mean for their lives, their aspirations, their jobs, their families, the places where they live."

The report features seven regional chapters "about how physical changes in the climate change people's lives," she said. And she said it will have a strong emphasis on cities.

Even without seeing the final report, activists call it a warning sign for the planet. "The IPCC's horrifying evidence of escalating climate impacts is set to show a nightmare painted in the dry language of science," Teresa Anderson, who heads climate justice issues at ActionAid International, said in a statement.

Scientists won't yet say specifically what's in the report because its critical summary is still subject to intense negotiation between the authors and governments over next two weeks, with consensus needed for the final version. Drafts that have circulated publicly will be changed, sometimes dramatically, before it is publicly released on Feb. 28.

Last August, the first of the three reports, which prompted the U.N. to de-

clare "code red," outlined the physical science of climate change while a third report coming out in March will be more about what can be done to curb and adapt to global warming. Without getting into specifics, report co-chair Hans-Otto Poertner said the science is clear that there are limits — including temperature limits — to what key ecosystems, species and humans can withstand. And in some places, warming is near those limits and in a few cases, such as much of the world's coral reefs, have even passed them.

"We are losing living spaces for species and for ourselves as well," Poertner, a German biologist said in a press briefing last week. "Because with climate change, some parts of the planet would become uninhabitable."

The report will also address ways to adapt to an ever warming world, including how some technological fixes may have unwanted side effects.

"In some countries in the Northern Hemisphere, there has been an assumption (of) 'Oh, well, if we cannot control climate change, we just let it go and we adapt to it. So we adapt out of the impacts of climate change,'" Poertner said. "And this is certainly a very illusionary approach." Environmentalists argue that the extreme weather already seen in parts of the world in recent years shows how urgent it is for governments to address the rising cost of climate change.

"The forthcoming IPCC report will confirm what we already know about the crushing toll of heatwaves, drought, floods, storms, wildfires and ocean acidification for people and critical ecosystems," said Rachel Cleatus of the Union of Concerned Scientists. "This comprehensive scientific assessment will underscore how much worse the climate crisis is likely to get if we fail to take bold global action." □

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HTTA

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HTTA

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HTTA

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HTTA

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Week 5/1315 (19k);
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Week 8/1409 (18k);
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Week 10/1207 (16k);
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Sta. Cruz	527 2900
San Nicolas	584 5000
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Ambulancia	911
Fire Dept.	115
Red Cross	582 2219

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Prof. Taxi	588 0035
Taxi D.T.S.	587 2300
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Avianca	588 0059
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Tom Holland in the video game adaptation 'Uncharted'

By JAKE COYLE

Goonies never say die, and neither do some of their storylines.

"Uncharted," a new movie based on the PlayStation video game, cribs heavily from adventures like "The Goonies" and its holy grail, "Indiana Jones." It's the kind of movie that wears its influences proudly on its sleeve to perhaps enlarge itself by those associations. Nathan Drake (Tom Holland), who was raised in an orphanage, has no reptile phobia to speak of but when his travels brings him to a cathedral, he utters in a very Jonesian fashion: "Nuns. Why's it always got to be nuns."

"Uncharted" is the latest in a proliferation of video game adaptations, and it's not hard to see why this PlayStation game, which launched with "Uncharted: Drake's Fortune" in 2007, was quickly picked up by Hollywood. The game, which came a few years on the heels of "National Treasure," with Nicolas Cage, was very much based on movies. So it's probably inevitable that "Uncharted" feels like a copy of a copy. But, you might thinking, so what? Globe-trotting adventures with puzzles and tunnels and booby trap are, by their nature, fun. Even a bland imitation — which is what "Uncharted" is — can be a good enough time. What you get out of



Tom Holland appears in a scene from "Uncharted."

Associated Press

"Uncharted" will likely depend on your standard of "a good enough time," but you can't fault it for skimping on scale, or failing to stuff itself to the gills with ancient texts and symbols and old maps. If it's treasure hunting you seek, regardless of reward, you have found it.

Director Ruben Fleischer, who eventually took over after "Uncharted" was in development for years with a long list of filmmakers, brings visual clarity and a touch of inventiveness to a handful of glossy set pieces. The movie opens with Nathan spinning through the air, a fitting place to start given that "Uncharted" trails Holland's last flight in "Spider-Man: No Way Home," by just two months. But after a few swings be-

hind a cargo plane, "Uncharted" jumps back to Nathan's childhood in New York. He's there with his older brother, Sam (Rudy Pankow), who describes them as descendants of the English explorer Sir Francis Drake and exhibits some of the same spirit of exploration. He's particularly fixated on the path of Ferdinand Magellan and treasure said to have been hidden by his expedition in the 16th century. When they're caught trying to steal Magellan's map, Sam is kicked out of the orphanage and the two never see each other again. Nathan occasionally receives postcards from far away.

It is, for sure, a postcard-thin backstory. But "Uncharted" gets properly underway when Nathan, now work-

ing as a bartender and petty thief, encounters Victor "Sully" Sullivan (Mark Wahlberg), an old treasure-hunting companion of Nathan's brother, who comes to him with a mission to find Magellan's lost treasure. Once they've tracked down a pair of MacGuffins — er, ancient keys — they set off for more clues in Barcelona. They have some competition, including a maybe-trustworthy adventurer named Chloe (Sophie Ali). But their main foe is a wealthy Spanish descendant of the Moncada family that financed Magellan's trip, still looking to recoup. He's played by Antonio Banderas, in his most growling villain mode, who's joined by a lethal martial artist (Tati Gabrielle).

The buddy movie balance

of "Uncharted" never clicks. Wahlberg, who was once attached to play Holland's part, plays Sully like Nathan's roguish, less tech-savvy elder. But they lack the needed chemistry and the script, by Rafe Lee Jenkins, Matt Holloway and Art Marcum, doesn't give them enough comic material to do much with. "Uncharted" is propelled instead by Holland's boyish enthusiasm. He's an awfully earnest protagonist for a swashbuckler like "Uncharted." There isn't a hint of danger in him, nor is there any romance found along the way. Instead, Fleischer's film has retrofitted a kind of coming-of-age story to suit Holland's generic but sweet dogooder charm. It's hard not to nod in agreement when Chloe tells him: "You're a good guy, Nate. Too good." There are other things a little out of sync in the wanly watchable "Uncharted." Every artifact uncovered in pursuit of the lost gold would, in their own right, be worth a fortune. And the bad guys here are so well financed that they could probably just sell their gear and be equally wealthy.

But preposterousness, not realism, is the mission of "Uncharted." And by that measure, the movie achieves what it set out to do in the Philippines finale that leads, like "The Goonies" did, to gold-filled underground ships. □

'Pose' star Rodriguez to receive GLAAD Media Awards honor



Actor Mj Rodriguez attends FX's "Pose" third and finale season premiere in New York on April 29, 2021.

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — "Pose" star Michaela Jaé "MJ" Rodriguez will be honored at the GLAAD Media Awards

for her efforts to advance acceptance for LGBTQ people of color.

Rodriguez, the first transgender woman to receive a lead actress Emmy nomination, will receive the Stephen F. Kolzak Award given to LGBTQ media professionals who counter anti-LGBTQ bias.

"Michaela Jaé Rodriguez is an undeniable talent who is changing the way audiences understand trans people while breaking down barriers for the trans community and LGBTQ people of color within the entertainment industry,"

GLAAD President and CEO Sarah Kate Ellis said in a statement.

Rodriguez, who earned a Golden Globe Award for her role of Blanca on "Pose," stars in Netflix's Lin-Manuel Miranda-directed film "tick...tick...BOOM!" and is to appear with Maya Rudolph in the announced Apple TV+ series "Loot." She also has an upcoming album release.

Rodriguez will be honored at the April 2 awards ceremony in Los Angeles. The late Kolzak was a prominent casting director who worked to raise aware-

ness in the entertainment industry about discrimination against LGBTQ people and people living with HIV. The 200-plus previously announced nominees in 30 categories include Lil Nas X, Demi Lovato, Elton John, "West Side Story," "Pose" and "Dancing with the Stars."

A May 6 ceremony in New York also will be held by GLAAD, a media advocacy organization.

The awards honor media for fair, accurate, and inclusive representations of LGBTQ people and issues. □

Epic tricks lift U.S. freestyle skiers to 1-2 Olympic finish

By **BERNIE WILSON**

AP Sports Writer

BEIJING (AP) — Shred, white and flew.

Innovative American freestyle skiers Alex Hall and Nick Goepper landed jaw-dropping tricks on the Secret Garden slopestyle course and won the gold and silver medals at the Beijing Olympics on Wednesday.

Hall clinched the gold on the first of three runs when he defied gravity with a trick called "right double 10 pretzel one." He spun 900 degrees one way and, as G-forces took over, stopped the spin in midair and spun 180 degrees the other way. He stuck the landing and skied in backward to the finish, earning a score of 90.01.

Goepper was so impressive on his second run that he clinched the silver with a score of 86.48.

American men have won six of nine medals since slopestyle made its Olympic debut in 2014. Goepper added to his silver from the 2018 Pyeongchang Games and bronze from the 2014 Sochi Olympics.

Also up in the mountains, Mikaela Shiffrin set the fastest time in a downhill training session ahead of the Alpine combined, which will be held Thursday. That will be the superstar skier's fifth event and she's still looking for her first medal.

Those were far better results than down in the city, where the U.S. men's hockey team was knocked out in the semifinals of the Olympic tournament when it blew a lead in the last minute of regulation and was shut out in a shootout, losing 3-2 to Slovakia.

On the slopestyle course, Hall and Goepper were rewarded by the judges for their epic creativity. Hall's gold medal was the eighth for the United States in Beijing.

"I'm just stoked I did it, my best slopestyle ever — and for the world to see that," said Hall, who was born in Alaska, grew up in Switzerland and lives in Utah.

"With where our sport's been going, a lot of what



From left silver medal winner United States' Nick Goepper, gold medal winner United States' Alexander Hall and bronze medal winner Sweden's Jesper Tjader celebrate after the men's slopestyle finals at the 2022 Winter Olympics, Wednesday, Feb. 16, 2022, in Zhangjiakou, China.

Associated Press

we do, we call 'spin to win,' and, so, everyone is spinning as much as they can," Hall said. "To take a new approach and do a trick that has almost no rotation but is still really, really hard — it was really, really sweet."

Goepper's big trick was a new approach at a double-cork 1440.

"Sometimes big contests are just sort of business as usual and you have to just slog together a run," Goepper said. "This, it felt good to do it how we wanted to do it."

The Secret Garden course has replicas of portions of the Great Wall carved out of artificial snow, and Goepper skied on top of a pagoda-shaped guard house known as The Shred Shed that doubles as a rail section up top.

"I think I had to separate myself in some other way," Goepper said. "And I also thought jumping on top of that house would be really cool."

SHIFFRIN SHINES — IN PRACTICE

The Beijing Olympics haven't gone Mikaela Shiffrin's way. She skied out of the two events she has gold medals in, the giant slalom and slalom, and didn't come close to win-

ning a medal in her next two races.

Maybe that will change in Thursday's Alpine combined. Shiffrin is the reigning world champion in combined and also won the silver medal in the 2018 Pyeongchang Games.

She finished Wednesday's training session in the downhill 0.93 seconds ahead of Wendy Holdener of Switzerland. The combined adds the times from one downhill run and one slalom run.

HOCKEY KNOCKOUT

The U.S. men's hockey team was the top seed in the knockout round and was looking for a deep run that would culminate in winning its first Olympic gold medal since the "Miracle on Ice" team in 1980.

It's not going to happen. The Americans blew a late lead and lost 3-2 to Slovakia in a shootout in the semifinals.

"I'm just sad it's over," U.S. captain Andy Miele said.

"Our team battled hard. Sometimes those bounces happen in hockey. Unfortunately it was on our side."

Marek Hrivik of Slovakia knocked a loose puck past goalie Strauss Mann to tie the game 2-2 with 43.7 seconds left in regulation. Peter Cehlarik scored the game winner in the shootout, while the Americans went 0 for 5 against Patrik Rybar.

Miele was the final American player denied by Rybar. He wiped away tears after the loss.

"It's a tough situation with the game riding on you," Miele said. "I wanted to score, I didn't and it stinks. I don't know what else to say."

MEN'S SLALOM

Clement Noel of France won the men's slalom on the strength of a fast second run. He moved up from sixth after the first leg to beat Johannes Strolz of Austria, who led after the

first run, by 0.61 seconds. World champion Sebastian Foss-Solevaag of Norway took the bronze.

WOMEN'S BIATHLON RELAY

Elvira Oeberg skied fast and shot clean in anchoring Sweden to Olympic gold in the four-woman biathlon. It was the third medal of the Beijing Games for Oeberg, who won silver in the sprint and pursuit races in her Olympic debut.

CROSS-COUNTRY

Norwegian skier Johannes Hoesflot Klaebo completed a second straight Olympic cross-country sprint double and Victoria Carl of Germany barely edged Swedish rival Jonna Sundling at the line in the women's race.

MEN'S AERIALS

Qi Guangpu of China won the gold medal in men's aerials after missing the podium in Sochi and Pyeongchang. Qi was the only competitor to cleanly land a quintuple-twisting triple back flip in the medal round.

Defending champion Oleksandr Abramenko of Ukraine won silver and Ilia Burov of the Russian team took bronze.

SHORT TRACK SPEEDSKATING

Choi Minjeong of South Korea successfully defended her Olympic title in the 1,500-meter short track speedskating race while Arianna Fontana of Italy took silver by two-thousandths of a second over Suzanne Schulting of the Netherlands. Fontana is the most-decorated short track skater in history with 11 Olympic medals, including three in Beijing.

The Canadian team of Charles Hamelin, Steven Dubois, Jordan Pierre-Gilles and Pascal Dion won the 5,000-meter relay, the country's eighth gold medal in the 45-lap race. □



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All-Star debut moment? Look to Morant, Ball for highlights

By **STEVE REED**

The NBA All-Star Game seems to be tailor-made for Ja Morant and LaMelo Ball. The flashy point guards are sitting atop the leaderboard when looking to see which of the seven first-time All-Stars will deliver a memorable moment during the league's annual showcase on Sunday.

"Melo's game is perfect for an All-Star Game," said Miles Bridges, who has been on the receiving end of numerous highlight reel, no-look passes from his Charlotte Hornets teammate the past two seasons. "He does All-Star Game type moves in (regular season) games, so I can't imagine what he's going to bring out for All-Stars. I'm excited to see what he

does with the best players in the league.

"It's going to be fun."

Joining Ball and Memphis' Morant as first-time All-Stars are Golden State's Andrew Wiggins, Toronto's Fred VanVleet, San Antonio's Dejounte Murray and Cleveland's Darius Garland and Jarrett Allen — who will be playing in front of their home fans.

Grizzlies head coach Taylor Jenkins believes Morant will put on a show.

"If you're going to talk about the most entertaining players in the NBA and those at the top of the list, I think Ja has to be up there with a small group," Jenkins said. "There is a lot of entertainment in this league and obviously the All-Star game is the ultimate highlight for



Memphis Grizzlies guard Ja Morant (12) guards Charlotte Hornets guard LaMelo Ball (2) during the first half of an NBA basketball game in Charlotte, N.C., Saturday, Feb. 12, 2022.

Associated Press

that, and I think Ja will fit in perfectly."

Morant and Ball are routinely at the center of jaw-dropping plays with their ability to create shots for themselves and others.

Fans enjoy watching them

slice through traffic to the rim, make defenders lose their footing with a step-back 3-pointer or cross-over dribble, and setting up teammates for dunks with their impressive court vision.

"As fan, I would be ex-

cited to watch him play in this type of game," Hornets coach James Borrego said of Ball, last year's NBA rookie of the year. "It's a free-flowing, highlight reel, play-making game that he's fit for. So he's going to bring a lot of excitement to the game and to his teammates. This is right up his alley."

Ball is the fourth-youngest NBA All-Star behind Kobe Bryant, LeBron James and Magic Johnson, and his swagger adds some spice to a game that will be missing perennial All-Stars like Kevin Durant, James Harden and Draymond Green due to injuries.

For Ball, and others, playing in the All-Star game is the realization of a childhood dream.

"I liked the jerseys and my parents would always have the game on and maybe make some cookies," Ball recently told ESPN. "But I remember going out and putting the rim down and getting dunks going...I knew I would fit in though. My whole life I thought I could be an All-Star, I saw the game and thought I could play in that."

Morant, the NBA rookie of the year in 2020, may get more opportunities to showcase his skills after being named a starter in his third pro season.

Jenkins expects Morant will have a "significant imprint" on the game.

"He's one of those great playmakers that can do it himself — get to the rim, play in the paint, knock down the 3-point shot and get out in transition. And you then you see the level of creativity he has with the lobs to his teammates, kick-outs for 3s. ... From an entertainment factor he is going to be one of the ultimate keys to the All-Star game's success on Sunday."

Morant was able to be with his family when he was selected to his first All-Star Game. "Getting the All-Star starting nod and being with (family) when my name was called, obviously was something I wanted to do, and I was able to do that," Morant said. □

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